

No. 59 John Rowland Martin

Quiet and unassuming; the son of a policeman, Jack Martin spent his childhood in the Hednesford and Cannock Chase area knowing and watching all of the players who made the mass exodus to League Football clubs during our golden age of the 1920s and 30s.

He was born in Hamstead, Birmingham, 5 August 1914, beginning his education at Hednesford's West Hill and Rugeley Grammar schools, going on to St Mark's and St John's Colleges, London. Having completed his studies, Jack played for the London Combined Colleges in 1931-32, moving back to Hednesford the following year to take-up a teaching post at West Hill where headmaster Billy Goring persuaded him to join the town's football team in October 1934. Jack made his debut, 10 November, at inside-right, in a 2-2 draw at Shrewsbury.

After only ten games, Villa signed Jack on amateur forms, 22 December, rushing through his part-time ones, 10 January 1935, and his full professional forms, 1 January 1936. However, he was given only one first-team game in each of the 1936-37 and 1937-38 seasons, much to the disapproval of disgruntled fans who had witnessed him control many games and score regularly for the reserves.

1938-39 saw Jack manage 22 appearances and score nine goals before WWII seriously curtailed his ambitions for the next seven years. During those war years, Jack was in the army and guesting for Birmingham and Nottingham Forest in 1939-40, Wellington, Aldershot and Portsmouth between 1941 and 1942 and for Tottenham Hotspur between 1942 and 1945.

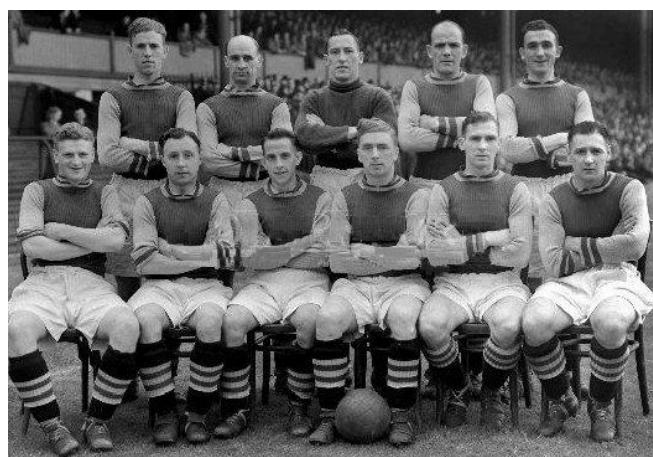
A Corinthian-type forward, tall and strong, he won international honours for England against Wales and Scotland, for the Football League against an All British XI in March 1940, the FA XI against The Army in March 1942, an All-British XI, the Combined Services and the Birmingham County FA. Even so, he still found time to play 48 games for Villa and score 14 goals in the Midland Wartime league.

Jack stayed with Villa until the end of the 1948-49 season, adding a further 60 appearances and 13 goals to his CV before retiring to concentrate, full-time, on teaching. He had played a total of 87 senior games and scored 14 goals, plus his wartime record

In June 1950, Hednesford invited him to become their manager and in his one season, 1950-51, he led the club to the Birmingham Combination Championship.

Back to teaching, I well remember 'Mr Martin' teaching me geography at Littleworth Secondary Modern School, Hednesford, in 1953. However, Jack

was still not finished with Hednesford Town FC for, between 1978 and 1980, and still living 100 yards or so from the club, he became treasurer of the Committee that was set-up to organise celebrations for our first 100 years. John Martin, my 'Mr Chipps', died in 1996.



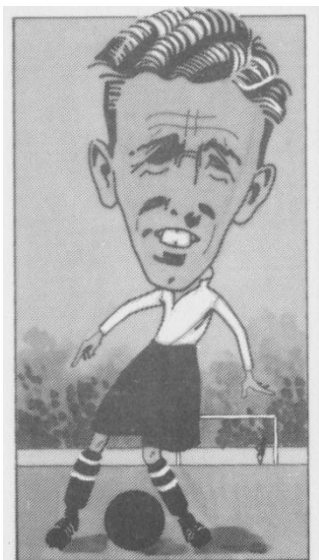
Jack, standing far left, with his Aston Villa colleagues in 1941.



John stands fourth from left, back row, with Villa in 1946-47.



The Villa Forward-line in 1947.



From a set of 24 by Dave Shaw By cartoonist Norman Edwards